NORTH Bi NORTHWEST

Newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of Gay community Social Services

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On Our Backs On The Ground

By Carole E Trainor

I hadn't understood the danger of even the question itself before now. "Are you straight or are you gay"? I thought I'd actually understood and addressed the question twenty thousand times over, and all those times I'd answered it as though I had. But I was wrong. A Bisexual can't answer this kind of question truthfully unless there is room enough to say yes and no at the same time, which, of course, there generally isn't. That's why Bisexuals are often accused of being either "crazy," or of being unapologetic, bold faced liars.

It's war on the ground here, and so it goes when we go to our backs as Bisexuals not knowing if we're straight, or gay, or in between, or both.

We've been trained to think like soldiers, here, in my country. We're embarrassed of any sign of human defeat. We want to be triumphant so we try to make even our queer literary expressions triumphant, and therefore (however tragic) our public expressions of queer desire as masculine as possible most of the time. If you were to scan through some of our more macho gay zines here, you would see some exceptionally tough images of leather-wearing men with their faces buried into other men's crotches. Its a way of expressing masculine love that will fuck its face off but will never be defeated—masculinity that will never be equated with femininity, even though getting fucked in the end is something both genders ultimately get (if they're good). Still, it should come as no great surprise to us that when I say this kind of thing aloud, it horrifies. It's almost unthinkable (I suppose) that a person should make no apologies for believing men to be on par with women sexually. But they, in fact, are (says the bisexual).

A lot of sexualized masculine images seek to show us that real men can fuck real men and still be real men. After all, what kind of soldier gets accolades for coming home after war, defeated—or worse—for running home, crying like a girl; only to spend the rest of his precious life waiting by the phone in hope of getting his empty hole plugged by the very soldiers that disgraced him? Yet, this condition of "defeat" is what, essentially, constitutes and eroticizes heterosexual femaleness (scary as it sounds).

I am given a few limited choices by my democratic country, then: Be a defeated woman and thus a "good" woman, or be a Lesbian who likes to fuck women so the rest of the world can watch you be like a man. Never am I given permission to be a triumphant manwoman in a woman's body, who likes to fuck soft, more femme men and women just like me. But I am that.

I am a BOY GIRL–WOMAN MAN. I am not a female or a male in the way that we have been taught to think about gender. I am a Bisexual and a Bigendered human. In this way, I like to fuck like a man, and feel like a girl. In reality, I am much more the masculine mind than most every man I know, but I am also much more the compassionate, kind hearted human than most women I know. That's why I terrify just about everybody. People need to know of me, "which of these two things are you? Are you a man or a woman...are you straight, or are you gay?" I tell them, "I'm all five."

I don't look on my sex as war, so the analogy of men throwing women and other men to their backs as war would throw a soldier to the ground, doesn't work for me. I don't invite men or women between my legs so I can throw them to the ground. I don't even engage male people so I can blow their heads off (well, not in that sense, anyway) because I don't equate sex with war. I equate sex with desire. Desire is an intellectual thing for me. Arousal is born in the mind, and of the mind. The right mind can bring me to my knees with its intensity and focus. It doesn't matter how old, how tall, how much money, or what gender. It's all about something other than that for me: It's about mind. The gender dichotomy (for me) separates and hurts mind.

Most men and women misunderstand sexual surrender. They especially misunderstand the sexual surrender of Bisexual women (especially straight men). Straight men, in particular, need to believe that women and other men are defeated in sex, that they are conquered through the act of "fucking" because that's what many men believe sex is—war. It's an ethic of rape, really, that many straight and gay men live by. It is also (most terrifyingly) at the very core of what we consider to be wholesome heterosexuality or macho, real-man sex. It's an integral part of the constitution of hegemonic "masculinity":

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We welcome submissions from women and men that concern feminism, politics, sexuality, or anything of interest to bisexual women. Help define our culture! Share your histories, anger, pleasure, energy. Send us your essays, poetry, photographs, drawings, book reviews, short stories, interviews, media reports, rants, cartoons, erotica, journals, theory, conversations and letters. You're important to us and what you have to say is important to everyone.

We accept submissions on disk with hard copy (PC), typed, legibly handwritten copy or e-mail (sbwn@hotmail.com). If you send us something and we publish it, you get a free issue. Let us know what pseudonym you use, if you do not want to publish under your everyday name.

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Deadline for submissions to the new issue: April 19, 2004.

SBWN Statement of Purpose

We are a group of self-identified women from diverse backgrounds working to create a feminist bisexual support network. We promote, in both the heterosexual world, and in the lesbian/gay community, the understanding and acceptance of bisexuality as one of many valid sexual identities.

We regard ourselves as part of the community united against heterosexism and homophobia. We are dedicated to the right of all people to define their own sexuality, free from any social, political, or economic coercion. The discriminations we face based on our gender and our sexuality are not the only forms of oppression. We recognize that oppression is non-hierarchical and that none of us is free until all of us are free. We have invested ourselves in the feminist struggle to transform our culture into one free of all forms of bigotry, hatred, and exploitation.

We seek to provide a safe place for women to explore all aspects of their sexual orientation and identity. All women are welcome to attend SBWN activities. We are exclusively a women's group in order to create a safe space for women's expression and leadership. We come together to affirm ourselves and our choices.

North Bi Northwest

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SBWN can always use volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. Give us a call or talk to a facilitator at a meeting.

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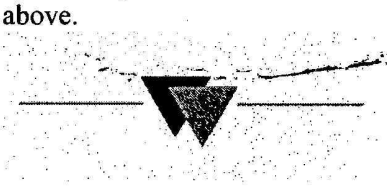

North Bi Northwest is a publication of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of:

Gay Community Social Services
P O Box 2228
Seattle WA 98122-0228

From the Editor...

SBWN got a compliment for getting our financial records in on time at the annual GCSS (Gay Community Social Services) meeting. Lisa attended the annual meeting on behalf of SBWN a few weeks ago. Thank you Lisa. She also reports that most of the other member projects are looking for dedicated volunteers to tend and update their websites. We are lucky to have Sheri doing such a good job with our financial record keeping and Diana keeping our website in such wonderful condition.

Things are looking up in the volunteer category. We have had several women come forward and offer to help out in different areas. Some of our longer term volunteers have decided to take time off and concentrate their energies on other projects. We still have volunteer needs to fill, particularly a new SBWN representative to GCSS.

We have decided to discontinue the women's poly discussion group for lack of attendance and burnout of the facilitator. We will add polyamory as a subject to our semi regular list of topics for the regular support group meetings. If, in the future, there is a need we can start the separate poly discussion up again.

I have been reading through old issues of North-Bi-Northwest lately. I am amazed at how little our lives as bisexual women have changed. The concerns expressed in those early articles are the same concerns we are still dealing with, recognition as legitimate by society, discrimination from the straight and lesbian communities, planning for the needs of our members and the future and direction of our group, sexually transmitted disease and safer sex practices, networking with other organizations, volunteers, social activities, monogamy and non-monogamy, what being bisexual means to each of us, LGBT government regulations.

The world for bisexual women has not changed all that much. We now walk openly and proudly down the street at Pride marches garnering cheers instead of taunts. We give out lots of literature and information at our booth at Pride. We hold meetings openly. We still have to constantly educate people we come into contact with about what bisexuality is and what it isn't. We are still accused of being on the fence, not accepting our true lesbianism, betraying women loving women by also loving men.

And speaking of networking, there are two large events coming this year that women and men might want to consider attending. On April 25, there is a March on Washington for Freedom of Choice. "The anti-choice movement is working overtime to take away a woman's right to choose and her right to privacy." to quote a recent Naral Pro-Choice America News letter. It's getting scary out there so we need to speak up. The second event is the Eighth International Conference on Bisexuality to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota August 5-8, at the University of Minnesota. This should be a great opportunity to meet other bisexual people and find out what is going on around the issue of bisexuality in other areas of the country. And maybe other countries. Their website is www.8icb.org for information or to register to attend. I enjoy going to conferences, spending several days being absorbed with bisexuality, walking and talking with other bisexual people, learning about things of mutual interest, eating meals and dancing with other bisexuals. It's exhilarating and exciting and challenging and I always come home energized and ready to fight the good bi fight for another day.

Cyprienne

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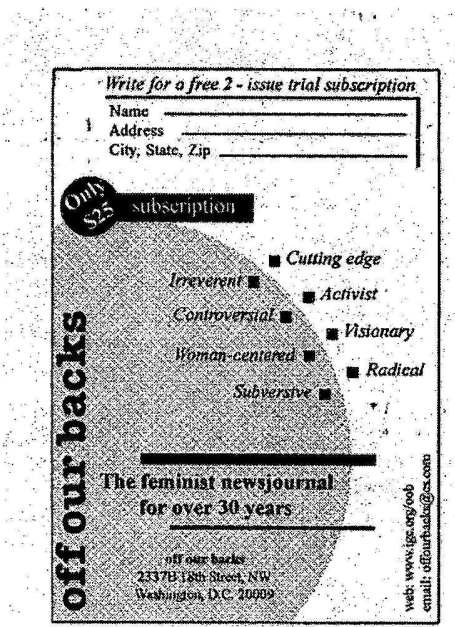

Without a woman's empty hole, or another man's "mancunt," hegemonic heterosexual men would have nowhere to put their cocks(and god knows, hegemonic heterosexual men need, first and foremost, somewhere to put their cocks). This is the very antithesis of sexual surrender, to my mind. It is "occupation"—having nothing to do with the choice to surrender.

I asked a Bisexual man not too long ago, what he felt it was that separated his sexual experiences with women from his sexual experiences with men. After thinking about it carefully, he claimed there really wasn't a whole lot of difference between the two experiences only that the vagina felt "wetter" to the cock. I laughed to hear this. He had actually answered my question with a single word (after pondering it for minutes): "wetter," he said, while nodding his head, pensively. The very idea that a degree of "wetness" might be all to separate gender in the minds of some, is a revolutionary notion, to say the least, but the only one, in fact, (at this time) inclusive of the orientation.

Intellectual desire is the very antithesis of war, I believe, and that's what makes depictions of Lesbian love so alluring to the heterosexual mind. We hope to see intellectual and emotional intimacy through watching the sex of Lesbian women. We want to know what intimate, sexual love looks like when it isn't war.

As a Bisexual, fucking is fun for me when it isn't war, and it can be highly charged as long as both people understand that one of us is not a woman, or a body bag of skin. The minute I'm treated like a "woman," or a body bag, I'm gone. I disappear. I don't open my legs to be defeated by a soldier who needs to be triumphant more than s/he wants highly charged intimate sex with me. War is one thing. Sex is something all together different for me. (Besides, I am much more strategic than all that when I set out to make war on someone or something. I would never do it, while lying naked with another person. I have my honor.)

It's hard for us to hear the voices of the sensitive in culture. Their voices are often drowned out by the loud voices of the masculine "brawn." This is rooted, I believe, in the way we understand our sex and our collective "heterosexuality." Truths are seen as testimonies of defeat. We want to hear only the voices of the triumphant, and of course all those who can't begin to compete for the position of triumphant warrior are lost in the shuffle. We lose touch with the realities of our elderly, our disabled, our mentally ill; our very young children– not to mention, our sensitive intellectual artists...

We forget there are immigrant and refugee families waiting for the chance for a hearing. We forget that there are such things as Racism and Sexism and Homophobia and Biphobia - making it impossible for many people to be heard. Still, we insist on exalting the triumphant. We don't even care most of the time how a person got social power. We just want winners. We want winners who succeed in arm wresting others to the ground. We find this kind of power sexy. It's brawn. It's masculine. It's the logic of winners (Who among us, after all, wants to be caught running away from the battle field all wounded–like and acting like a girl?). It's crazy making for the bisexually queer.

I love sex because it celebrates life; not because it destroys it. I love sex with both genders because it allows me to stay connected to the whole of me. I can be present to the moment when I'm having sex with the right boygirl person. I can be the softhard boygirl who exalts the one I'm adoring in that moment and s/he can be the same. I can bring him/her closer to his/her own desires, to her/his own wholeness. That way, s/he can better understand mine, and the ballroom dance can go on. I can sing and I can dance in my spirit and in my body when I am kissed sufficiently and understood sufficiently. I can laugh with greater honesty, and cry with greater profundity when arms are holding me, while mine are holding on. I am safe when I am inside a delicate, intimate, bigendered, bisexual balance...

I can offer up brand new thoughts to the world as a result of mingling my essence with the gorgeous and whole essence of another bisexual or gaylesbian who knows no gender. I can transform the world with the power I am able to harness through my getting naked enough with another human mind. I can go to sleep dreaming after I feel sufficiently intimate. I can wake up with new vision.

Lastly, I can fly away like a tiny, brand new little songbird afterward; feeling as though all of me had just been immersed in a tiny puddle of cool rain water, formed by an autumn rain on a day when all the world has forgotten that there is such a thing as war. And I don't have to wait beside the phone for anything, because there's not (in fact) a songbird alive that has an empty orifice in need of plugging. You need to trust me on this one.

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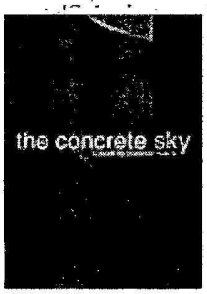
Book Reviews

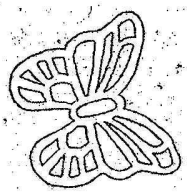


The Concrete Sky
By Marshall Moore
Genre: Gay Male Fiction
Book Review by Sheri

"A high-speed chase through the life of a young man trying to make sense of his life in a world gone wrong!
Things are not going well for Chad Sobran. His mother is gravely ill. His creditors are circling like sharks. And he's being stalked by his violent, homophobic, and obsessive older brother Martin. One night, while drunk at a party, Chad falls off a balcony and breaks his wrist. He comes to in a psych facility, under observation. Martin has convinced the emergency room doctors that the fall was a suicidal jump." From the back cover of The Concrete Sky.

I found this book to have few to no redeeming qualities. Though I should note that this opinion may not be shared by all. The book did come recommended as a highly entertaining read. I, on the other hand, could barely finish it. The character development was shallow and unbelievable. The sex scenes did not leap out to save the day. There seemed to be an excess of murders that might have been tolerable if this was a mystery—which it wasn't. Bisexual behaviors in characters were completely ignored. AND, worst of all was the trite way the author handled mental health problems.

Granted, we do not have an optimal mental health system in America... Still, the book is predicated on the completely ludicrous idea that an adult could be drunk at a party, fall off a balcony, and his aggressively dominant brother could easily convince the EMT people to have him committed for 3 days due to "suicide" attempt. It is almost impossible to get needed care for people—much less 3 days of inpatient treatment with tons of therapy medication for something no one thinks is a suicide attempt except the unstable brother!! The dollar figures alone associated with that would be prohibitive!! This irritating premise might have been overlookable if the book didn't then continue to trash all mental health workers, present a stereotypical 1970's view on treatment and treat people with mental health problems like props in a bad movie. Needless to say—my view on this book is—DON'T BOTHER.



Hi, I'm Bi
By Michelle Bates

So much of what we learn about people takes place during casual conversations, using subtle clues to figure others out, often without even being aware of it. When someone mentions a relationship, past or current, we automatically assume that the sex of that person is the identifier to the orientation of the person we're getting to know. I do it too how else do we learn about people but to listen to what they say about themselves?

But every time I talk about a particular lover, I feel like this automatic identification pigeonholes me in a way that doesn't represent the fullness of my sexuality. The mention of a male denies my interest in women, and an opportunity may be lost if this new acquaintance happens to know the perfect girl for me. Mentioning a woman, on the other hand, can place me in the unfamiliar and inaccurate territory of being identified as a strict lesbian.

But when telling a story about someone in my life, it is awkward to qualify it with an explanation that would better identify the whole of who I am. To throw in a comment about being bisexual would assume that the listener was making assumptions, changes the course of the conversation, and sometimes is more information than the other person really wants to know. So nothing usually gets said. But then a precedent is set, and I feel anxious about when and how I'm going to reveal myself to this person down the road not because I have a problem with my orientation, but because I feel a little like I've been dishonest and now have to come clean. It seems like it would be so much easier if I only dated men or women; then the casual conversation dropping of a name would take care of things and all would be out in the open, with no further explanations or qualifications necessary.

What is the answer? Should we push to get everyone assumed bisexual unless proven otherwise? That could take a while even if it made sense. Should we refer to all our past relationships by gender-neutral names to keep them guessing? In the end, I guess it just means that it takes a while for someone to get to know me, and different people will have different ideas of who I am, but isn't that true in life anyway?

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This is the first of a series of stories to come out of my recent trip to Antarctica. I write these stories to help me process what I saw and experienced and to give you the opportunity to share in the adventure without having to buy the plane ticket. If these tales inspire you to go off and see these sights for yourself, more power to you! If, on the other hand, you gain some measure of entertainment or escape by means of them, good enough. Either way, it offers me a chance to give back some of the joy and excitement I achieve by these travels.

Enjoy!
Janice Van Cleve

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ANTARCTIC CONVERGENCE
By Janice Van Cleve

I never believed that there was such a thing as an Antarctic Ocean. I mean, how does a person know where the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans stop and where the Antarctic Ocean begins? Who's to say that these other three don't just continue right up to the icy southern continent itself?

The scientists say there is a clear boundary. They call it the Antarctic Convergence. Supposedly this is where the cold surface water from Antarctica meets the warmer surface waters of the other three oceans and, being heavier, sinks beneath. Instead of simply cycling back where they both came from and leaving well enough alone, the warm waters take off in a raging eastern current that circles Antarctica. The cold waters, so they say, just continue north. This leaves a deficit around the southern continent, so the deeper Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Ocean waters move in underneath the convergence and well up to the surface closer to the pack ice, bringing with them rich nutrients from the ocean bottom.

Just for giggles, these waters then take off west around the continent. Reminds me of a traffic circle in England. It's all very confusing and scientific. Probably involves math. Math was not on my mind, however, when I boarded the good ship *Akademik Ioffe* to sail down to Antarctica. I was not aware of currents converging or going anywhere when I got up on the top deck in shorts and t-shirt to watch the beautiful sunset at Ushuaia. The blazing reds and oranges and yellows from the setting sun were answered by the most surreal luminous blues on the opposite side of the sky. Even the clouds seemed radiant and tangible – more like mashed potatoes than cotton. They had body and substance. Ushuaia is the southernmost city in Argentina, at about the 55th latitude. Maybe because this was summer, when the South Pole is tilted toward the sun, what I was seeing is sunset and pre-dawn all at the same time. Whatever it was, it was one of the most gorgeous twilight displays I have ever witnessed.

As we chugged across Drake Passage the sun shone brightly. The sky was blue and the waters reasonably calm. I spent my time getting my gear ready for kayaking, attending lectures about penguins, and studying in the library. The *Akademik Ioffe* is a former Soviet research ship with enough electronics on board to find anything it wants to find in the ocean—currents, fishes, and no doubt U.S. submarines. What it lacks is funding, which is why today's Russians lease the ship to Peregrine Adventures for tours like this. The crew is Russian and very friendly. The ship is immaculate but definitely a work boat. It has propellers and engines to go sideways, backwards or even turn on a dime. It is build in that heavy, durable Soviet style that looks like it could take any hardship. It has its amenities, however. The bar is friendly and warm, the sauna is delicious, and the cabins are comfortable. Peregrine cooks served up gourmet meals for us in the dining room and the Russian table servers are more attentive than many you'd find in fine restaurants back home.

Like I said, the *Ioffe* is a research vessel and, as a dedicated scientist of beverages, I did have work to do. I attended a wine tasting on board and sampled a wide range of Australian reds—all in the line of duty, mind you. I continued my work at dinners, making my way as best I could through the whites. The bartender on board was an amiable fellow and he allowed me to demonstrate the proper way to construct a Black Russian (2 shots vodka, 1 shot coffee liquor, 1 ice cube). It seemed the most appropriate drink, being as this is a Russian ship.

Then we crossed the 60th parallel. The brisk, refreshing air took on a frosty edge that tingled and even stung. The wind kicked up a notch as well and the sky grew darker. The sea continued its heaving and tossing but now the froth on the whitecaps appeared brittle instead of foamy. The temperature plunged very noticeably. Something different had happened. I climbed down from the top deck to get on warmer clothing. When I returned, sea and sky had merged into a foreboding gray. No horizon did they reveal. Ahead of us, the ocean's endless tumult faded imperceptibly into a gathering gloom. The air pressed in around us like a brooding hen, both protector and captor. The wind grew ever more insistent and occasionally threw icy needles of sleet in my face.

Presently a white mass loomed out of the gray. Our first iceberg. It was flat as an aircraft carrier and twice as big. Its mass far exceeded our imaginings. Waves slapped underneath its exposed girth like measured applause to greet us. Other icebergs came into view—huge grotesque forms in white, lumbering heavily on their way, heedless of our passage. Finally in the distant fog a darker shape took form. We drew nearer and it grew larger. Then another and another. Jagged rocky spikes they were, poking up from the watery chaos of bergybits and crashing waves. Land! We became suddenly aware, as Captain James Cook must have become, that something unknown was there—some land beyond the end of the world, hidden and raw. Our excitement overcame any anxieties the approach to this place had generated. We had arrived at the southern continent!

Now I am a believer. There really is an Antarctic Ocean. It really does have a boundary that I have seen with my own eyes and felt with my own skin. It is not some wall or raging barrier or geophysical landmark. Rather it is the palpable sense that one has crossed into another world, another realm where other rules hold sway. It is a world beyond cities and infrastructure and all the busy-ness of the human-dominated continents.

Scientists call this boundary the Antarctic Convergence. I rather see it as the hem of a huge mantel that Antarctica draws about herself in regal majesty, declaring in no uncertain terms who is boss here. She is the all-powerful queen of the southern reaches of our planet, a queen who tolerates guests on her terms only. She is to be approached in awe and wonder, with humility and respect.

Janice Van Cleve is a writer whose journey to the Antarctic was made January 2–11, 2004. Copyright 2004.

"Labels"

My Mom attended the Fifth International Bi Conference with me in April 1998. The experiences she later shared, as an Involved and Increasingly Queer-Clueful Heterosexual Parent, stuck with me. Especially her insight about how much time bisexuals spend talking about labels. She grasps our felt need, as sexuality (and sometimes gender) "minorities," to present accurate and positive portraits of our identities and communities, not just to the outside world but even to ourselves.

She's heard bi folk talk about the exclusion we often feel from both straight and gay/lesbian communities over the negative stereotypes attached to bisexuality, to say nothing of our sheer invisibility. So she understands the sense of mission many bi activists feel about our work, which sometimes means simply standing up AS bisexual, or putting the word back in a conversation it's been dropped from. Get enough bisexuals together, though—even two will do—and you find we don't necessarily even agree on the definition of bisexuality, or what it means to claim "bisexual" as a label for anything.

Fritz Klein, the sexuality authority famous for showing how the Kinsey scale doesn't even begin to capture sexual diversity, has suggested that bi's fall into three rough divisions: "straighter" low-Kinsey bi's, "gayer" ones toward the other end of the scale, and those whose gender attractions are roughly equal.

I've noticed similar subgroups. But I'm not convinced they're important. A former casual boyfriend who identifies as bi is mostly involved with women, yet I would never mistake him for a straight man. Not even one of those queer-friendly ones comfortable showing affection for non-straight male friends. He kisses too well. And much as I could be mistaken for gay by outsiders, given my strong tendency toward involvements with men, I don't think most of my bi and bi-aware friends are confused about me. A former girlfriend, who really is close to Kinsey 3, considers me genuinely bi, though she does sometimes jokingly point out the number of men I've been interested in, and wonders when I'm going to get involved with a woman again.

So Klein's labels feel cumbersome to me. Yet I agree they may specify real differences. Then consider the difference between bisexuals who don't feel their partner's gender makes much difference to them and those who find gender very important, though pleasurably so.

Or those who consider themselves bi because they have experienced large shifts in their Kinsey number over the years, and those whose degrees of dual attraction have remained relatively unchanging.

Or those who come to the bi community from gay or (very often) lesbian backgrounds, and those who have spent many years in straight environments. Or bi women, and bi men. To say nothing of all the other sexuality and gender tags well known in the gay and lesbian communities, which bi's often exhibit too. Butch and femme. Top, bottom, and switch. Kink and vanilla. Monogamous and polyamorous.

"Bisexual" is almost too confining. For one thing, what's with the assumption that the number of genders is only two? Small wonder many in the bi community don't label themselves at all. Even those folks, however, often find themselves compelled to go on at length about exactly what they aren't labeling, and why. Mom attended a workshop in which all these topics came up, and probably more. "What label could do justice to the incredible fluidity most of us experience in our sexuality?" one participant wondered.

Being a practical and somewhat cheeky sort, Mom promptly piped up, "Why don't you call yourselves the Fluids?" If fluidity is what defines you, she went on, why not call yourself THAT, and see if it saves you some time trying to pin down the intricacies of what you're fluid about. I haven't heard anyone follow suit yet (sorry, Mom). Maybe it sounds too much like those shape shifters on *Deep Space Nine*. But it was a neat case of left-field thinking. And the serious issues remain.

I suspect the difficulty bisexuals have with labels partially explains the often fragmentary dynamics of our communities, and perhaps also our relative invisibility. It certainly affects our image in gay and lesbian communities. There, the refusal to self-label, or the insistence on labels fraught with contradictions, sometimes reads as copping out and closeting. Or introducing dangerous murkiness, when what's needed to resist homophobia seems to be a clear, unambiguous place to

stand. Amanda Udis-Kessler is only one of several bi-identified writers to discuss bisexuality as a term that forces a "crisis of meaning." What do you mean, you're "bisexual AND gay"? What do you mean, you "choose not to label yourself, but you're a queer man in a monogamous relationship with a woman"? What do you mean?

Depending on the task at hand, discussing such topics can seem to rob us of time and focus. On the other hand, it's clear that being "gay" or "lesbian" doesn't, and shouldn't, mean any single thing either. It's also painfully clear at times—say, the effects of racism within queer communities—that sexual identity, though important, is not all that defines us. So we all tend to use many labels for ourselves. We may hope to create a world where neutral differences are less violently censured. But differences will probably remain. They'll need labels.

That said, bisexuals contribute positively by reminding us that differences exist not just between labels, but within them, and indeed within ourselves.

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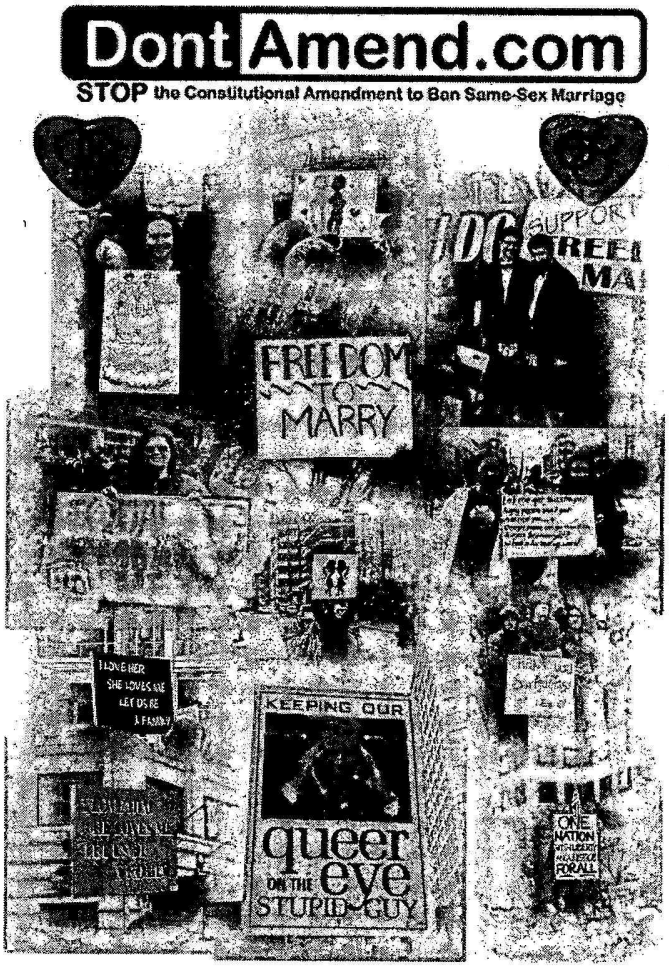
Don't Amend

Today Susan and I are going to the rally at Westlake against a Constitutional amendment to decide who gets to love who. I find this so hard to understand. How can people loving each other be a problem? How can what two people do in Massachusetts affect someone's marriage or children in Alabama? I just don't get it.

I did read an article recently in the magazine "In the Family" - it's a spin off of the popular Psychotherapy Networker. That author's take is that the institution of marriage is breaking down because it no longer works that well. It was started long ago when economics were different, social norms around women working was different, and many social constructs were different.

The reason, this person contends, that there is so much hoopla around gay marriage right now is that it's a place to go and point. But, as usual, it's about a bigger-picture thing. It's about how people stay connected in a culture of disconnect. It's about how people stay connected when people are becoming more isolated with the progress of technology. How to do this? And it's hard. And it takes work. Easier to get upset about something that has nothing to do with one's own marriage—with one's own inability to work through stuff and do the hard things necessary to keep a relationship going in this culture at this time.

Judy



I distributed flyers and information about the Don't Amend Rally on February 14, 2004 at Westlake Park in downtown Seattle. This was part of a national effort sponsored by dontamend.com to express our demands not to amend the constitution to ban gay marriages. The fight for same sex marriage started in 1971 with *Baker v. Nelson* in the state of Minnesota and is now coming to a head with legalized same-sex marriages in San Francisco. As of this article 900 same-sex couples have been married. Whether they will remain legal is still a question but for now many couples are celebrating the validation of their committed lives together.

Here are the main areas that organize the 1049 rights and responsibilities granted and assigned by legal marriage put together in 1997 by the United States General Accounting Office. http://www.gao.gov/archive/1997/og97016.pdf

- Social Security and Related Programs, Housing, and Food Stamps
- Veterans' Benefits
- Taxation
- Federal Civilian and Military Service Benefits
- Employment Benefits and Related Laws
- Immigration, Naturalization, and Aliens
- Indians
- Trade, Commerce, and Intellectual Property

- Financial Disclosure and Conflict of Interest
- Crimes and Family Violence
- Loans, Guarantees, and Payments in Agriculture
- Federal Natural Resources and Related Laws
- Miscellaneous Laws

The only way to win this battle is to be politically active. I encourage all of you to contact Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell as well as your House representative. You can find out who they are at http://ga0.org/lifelong/home.html Tell them to vote against the Federal Amendment to the Constitution. It takes ten minutes to write a letter or send an email. Their decision can affect you for a life time.

Diana

Annual Report as of January 24, 2004.

2003 Highlights:

- SBWN turned **20** this year, and we celebrated with a bash in July at the LGBT Community Center, raising several hundred dollars that evening!
- SBWN changed meeting locations in August after the unexpected closure of the LRC. We are very grateful to the LGBT Center for generously availing meeting space to us two Sundays each month.

Newsletter

- Sixty on list.
- One-third are scholarships or trades, the rest are paid.
- Notices in the newsletter continue to be an effective way of getting revenue—i.e. this last round brought in over $120 in renewed memberships—with a member as far away as Ohio!
- Several libraries receive the SBWN newsletter.
- Only newsletter expenses then are printing and mailing.

Money

- Polyfi continues to send us money on a regular basis after their meetings—they sent us $149 last year. We continue to send them the extra newsletters we have.
- We have about $700 in the bank and have already paid GCSS for the year.
- We should give another donation to the LGBT Center. We gave them $50 in September.
- The quarterly report will go in the mail to GCSS hopefully on Tuesday the 20th.
- Meeting donations, membership, and newsletter solicitations generate most of our revenue.

Mail

- Retrieving mail from the PO Box has been one of SBWN's biggest volunteer challenges, although that has been covered well in the last few months.

Meetings

- Attendance continues to be sporadic, but tends to be high for safer sex and other health-related topics.
- Facilitators are another scarce volunteer resource, but there is core group that is covering this for now, with several new volunteers having expressed interest.

Miscellaneous

1) Web traffic has increased and continues to be a source of connection, publicity, and information in the community.
2) SBWN email announcement list includes over 160 email addresses.

SBWN looks forward to continuing to be a resource for the bi women's community in Seattle, offering social outings, support and information meetings, a newsletter and email bulletin, and website. SBWN plans to be a presence in Gay Pride Day again this year, as well as continue twice-monthly meetings at the LGBT Community Center.

Defining Bisexuality in the 21st Century

The *8th International Conference on Bisexuality* is a four-day conference of artistic and academic collaboration, networking, and performance. 8ICB is an amazing opportunity for the exploration of issues pertaining to bisexuality. Bisexuals and their allies from all walks of life will unite to promote increased understanding of bisexuality. In the past, this international event has been held in Australia and England. When last in the United States, ICB was held at Harvard University in Boston.

The Bisexual Organizing Project here in Minneapolis-St. Paul and the Bisexual Foundation are proud to bring you this event hosted by the GLBT Programs Office at the University of Minnesota August 5-8, 2004!

www.8icb.org for more information
The conference planning committee is pleased to release a call for proposals for workshops, panels, presentations, and other presenter events. The proposal form may be submitted on-line.

Mailing Address:
8th Intl Con on Bisexuality
711 West Lake Street - Suite #400
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408

Bi Hotline: 612-825-4400
1+800-800-0350 x583
Toll-free access provided by OutFront Minnesota.

The "Wu Wu" Page

...for entertainment only...

Horoscopes

ϕ Aquarius Jan 20 to Feb 18

Key word: Birth. It's a new year, Baby! Take advantage of the clean slate and get your finances in order once and for all. ♒ Goals that once seemed intangible are finally within your reach. Now comes the hard part; you have to decide what is best for you and what it is that you are truly willing to live with. Some of the decision making can be worked through with the help of mediation, but you truly are going to have to use your raw intellect for the truly important choices. Take some time, but don't dwell. You could overwhelm yourself.

λ Pisces Feb 18 to Mar 20

Key word: Tenderness. Life has been rough—like sandpaper. It's hard to feel those who care through the pain from all the bumps and bruises. Sometimes you just have to use your brain and sort out who's to be trusted and who's not. Your heart is just too tender right now, but don't underestimate the power of your mind. It can serve you well in a pinch such as this. ♓The dream of a happy home and family seems to draw you astray, but do not despair. It will all come together soon. Those closest to your heart are physically closer to you than you know. Word of loved ones afar will breeze in with the next change of the wind's direction.

α Aries Mar 20 to April 20

Key word: Forgiveness. Either you get it or you don't. If you do, then you know what's next. If you cannot yet find it in your heart to forgive, you truly need to go back and dig out that which began the snowball effect that is your life's albatross. When you open your heart, you will know true love. μ Difficulties are coming to a close. You have a new sense of clarity to thank for that. Somehow you are now able to take the reigns and give a much needed rest to someone close to you. It will be hugely appreciated. (But do give your beneficiary the chance to catch a breath before thanks arrive.) There is still a rough road ahead but it is not long before you will be through it. Just remember the kindnesses shown to you by others in the past and give as much back to the universe as possible. This will light the way for you.

β Taurus Apr 20 to May 21

Key word: Purpose. Honey if you know you have purpose, and you know what that purpose is; GO FOR IT!! Not so many people are as lucky as you. Many search all their lives to understand why they are here. Embrace your good fortune and fly. ν So much potential threatens to slip through your fingers. For most, the window of opportunity may already have passed, but these days you just seem to lead a charmed life. Don't just stand there!..Get going! It's not every day the universe slows the bus for you to hop on.

χ Gemini May 21 to Jun 21

Key word: Strength You acquire so much of your strength from nature. Think of this though; nature takes a break in the winter months. You need to also. Renew your strength. Rest. ο You have the ability to attract a great deal of love and nurturing from others. These people around you are very serious about taking care of you. Don't test their resolve, you will be sorry. Take your medicine (and your chicken soup) and be quiet for a while. The world will get on without you for a while. ...And the spring brings new projects for you to tackle...

δ Cancer Jun 21 to Jul 22

Key word: Spontaneity. Heh, heh... Cancer, you rarely show your hand, but the universe knows that you plan your spontaneous lifestyle very carefully. Try just once to do something out of the ordinary (your sense of the ordinary that is). Break out of character. See if you like it. Then try it again. ♋ You have a strong sense of who you are and what integrity means to you. That will not go away. You will not lose yourself by seizing new adventures. Perhaps you will in-fact enrich your sense of self. It's time for something new.

ε Leo Jul 22 to Aug 23

Key word: Love. There is so much more to life than all that shows. You know that. But sometimes you forget. Remember to show appreciation for those who love you so dearly. ♌ Life might turn a bit too soggy with sentiment for you this season, but you know you love the attention. It would seem that the world is your oyster. Love is all around you. Enjoy it. Savor it. You are truly loved and lucky.

κ Virgo Aug 23 to Sept 23

Key word: Power. You seem so shy and retiring. Few would guess the power you wield. But you know. It is best to keep it under wraps as you do, but do use it in your favor when you have need. You will not be respected if you don't. ♍ Look around you. Who is your soul mate? This is someone who you feel warmth from although you may think you do not know them well. If you do not recognize that person now; he or she will soon be visible.

γ Libra Sept 23 to Oct 23

Key word: Clarity. You are blessed with an ability to cut through the fog this season. This is a good thing because many are confused and wearied by the weather and post holiday blues. Understand that you are indeed carrying the torch for many right now. They need your guidance. ♎ Aaah. You are able to save some money right now. That no doubt feels good, but take time from accumulating wealth to enjoy your loved ones. They are tired of sharing you with your work and extended family. Give them as much time as possible—spring seems so far away and you provide their only source of sunshine these days.

η Scorpio Oct 23 to Nov 22

Key word: Truth. Well Scorpio, you are old enough now to know truth from fiction. Yes you may be prone to fantasy, but be realistic. Don't let smooth talkers take advantage of you and those you truly care about. τ You are in a position to take charge of your finances. You will rule these matters with a kind hand but are quite adept at it. Don't be afraid to handle money. In fact, now would be a very good time for you to diversify or look for that loan or financial backer you have been thinking of for your business.

ι Sagittarius Nov 22 to Dec 21

Key word: Adventure. Well, it's not like you really shy from adventure; you make every day seem like an adventure, but even you may be surprised at what is just around the corner for you. Be prepared. υ You are a person of honor. You must maintain that honor by not leaving loose ends. Look about you. Has time passed and left you unknowingly remiss? Clean up your act. No need to feel sheepish, just politely clear up matters and get on with things.

φ Capricorn Dec 21-Jan 20

Key word: Simplicity. You've been busy. You are due to rest a bit. No need to stop all together, just simplify. Say "yes' to fewer things. Coast a little while, but remain alert. ♑ You are in good standing with friends and finances. This is all due to your hard work. Don't make the mistake of giving the credit to someone else. They just might take it and run. That goes for your finances too. Watch your important papers and records closely these next few months. Unscrupulous persons are dangerously close to your electronic information at this time. Keep an eye on things.

Send in your questions for our
Wu Wu page psychic:
Write to cowbone@earthlink.net or send your questions to SBWN c/o the Wuwu page: PO Box 30645, Greenwood Station, Seattle WA 98103-0645

SBWN announces a new reoccurring column in our newsletter, North Bi Northwest.

Saucy Dish!
All things sensual and sexy!

This column promotes sexuality education and offers insight into sex positive culture. Information contained within will be bold, opinionated, and often based on experience and research. Please ask questions about safer sex, our bodies, pleasure, relationships, sexual exploration, sex toys, sexy wear, flirting, and more…

Send letters to SBWN Attn: Saucy Dish, POB 30645, Greenwood Station, Seattle, WA 98113-0645 or email your questions to: saucydish@hotmail.com

Comments from our group:

1 February 2004—Bi-101

"This is always a good topic. I enjoyed the slightly larger attendance, more opinions."

"It was really fun to have so many new people and such an involved discussion. :-)"

"Before I come here it always seems like too much of an effort – then when I get here it is so interesting and energizing. I really appreciate the passion and perspectives of this group."

And some comments made during the meeting.

"You fall in love with people before you take note of their genitalia."

"I don't choose to be attracted or reactive to people but I do choose how I will behave given that attraction."

Calendar

For locations, confirmations, or more information, call the appropriate message machine and someone will get back to you (with discretion if requested). For SBWN events call (206) 517-7767 or check our website, http://www.geocities.com/sbwn/. For all other Seattle events (BiNet, Polyfidelity) call (206) 728-4533 or check the websites listed under Local Groups.

Sunday, February 1st, 4 to 6pm: Poly discussion.

Sunday, February 1st, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Bi 101.

Sunday, February 8th: No meeting.

Sunday, February 15th, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Valentine social.

Sunday, February 22nd: No meeting.

Sunday, February 29th: No meeting.

Sunday, March 7th 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Activism.

Sunday, March 14th: No meeting.

Sunday, March 21st 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Potluck, social, open, theme: Rice.

Sunday, March 28th: No meeting.

Sunday, April 4th 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Business social, potluck.

Sunday, April 11th: No meeting.

Sunday, April 18th 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Potluck social.

Sunday, April 25th: No meeting.

Sunday, May 2nd 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Topic to be announced.

Sunday, May 9th: No meeting.

Sunday, May 16th 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Business social.

Sunday, May 23rd: No meeting.

Sunday, May 30th: No meeting.

Local Groups

Seattle Bisexual Women's Network
Support and discussion groups at the Seattle LGBT Community Center, 1115 East Pike Street, Seattle, WA
(206) 517-7767
http://www.geocities.com/sbwn/
E-mail: sbwn@hotmail.com

When attending support group meetings, please refrain from wearing perfumes or other scented products for the comfort of all.

Polyfidelity Discussion Group
Support group and community for people in or interested in multipartner relationships. Discussions and literature on responsible non-monogamy, intimate networks, alternative relationships and community. Bi-monthly potluck discussions are held at 5:30 pm at the SPCC (Sex Positive Community Center, aka "The Wet Spot"). 1630 15th Ave W., Seattle, WA.
(206) 728-4533.
http://www.scn.org/~spg/index.html

BiNet Seattle
BiNet Seattle is a non-profit, mixed-gender social and support organization created to foster a visible community for bisexual, bi-curious people and their partners in the Puget Sound area. http://www.binetseattle.org

Seattle LGBT Community Center
The Center's mission is to create a meeting place for the LGBT community to grow together, increase public understanding, and celebrate our diversity.
1115 East Pike Street
(206) 323-LGBT (5428)
http://www.seattlelgbt.org

Lesbian Resource Center
A community–based organization committed to advancing the status of lesbians by combating oppression and promoting empowerment, visibility, and social change. (206) 322-3953.
http://www.lrc.net